



Praying to the Lord of the Harvest, LCMS World Mission, in collaboration with its North American and worldwide partners, will share the Good News of Jesus with 100 million unreached or uncommitted people by the 500th anniversary of the Reformation in 2017.

Lesson 3—Give

Memory verse: Luke 12:33-34 (NIV)

Sell your possessions, and give to the needy. Provide yourselves with moneybags that do not grow old, with a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches and no moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

Connect: What was the most memorable Christmas, birthday, or anniversary present you received? What is the most extravagant, perhaps even frivolous, gift that you purchased for someone? What was the response of the person who received the gift? How did you feel giving the gift?

Study:

View Video

- 1) In our sin we are born _____.
 - a) You see it among the disciples, who found themselves arguing over which was the greatest
 - b) In the Last Supper with them, Jesus models service as he washed feet
 - c) This attitude of generosity and giving makes an impact on the disciples. As the early church gets its footing in Acts 2, we see the disciples serving, caring, and sharing.

- 2) Through Christ and his body, the church, God's grace is given
 - a) Still today Jesus pours his grace _____ people
 - b) Still today Jesus pours his grace _____ people

- 3) The Spirit moves our hearts to _____.
- a) Generosity as a way of _____.
- b) Personal gifts to advance his mission of _____.

Give with an Open Hand

- 1) How does our culture tell us to be grabbing for one thing after another?
- 2) What are some of the gifts that God gives you?
- 3) How does knowing that God daily “provides us with all that we need to support this body and life” free us to approach others with open hands, giving hands?
- 4) Can you think of some examples of the church of today being marked by open hands?
- 5) Richard Foster in his book, “Celebration of Discipline,” lays out some principles to help us do an inventory on this kind of question. Are you a giver or a grabber? If you feel comfortable, discuss the inventory on page 53 of the devotional guide with the group.

Give with a Servant’s Heart

How can financial debt hold power over you? Joshua 24:15 states: *“But if serving the LORD seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your forefathers served beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD.”* If an outsider looked at your calendar and your bank statement, who do think they would think you serve? Jesus said: Luke 16:13 (NIV) *“No servant can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money.”* How do you try to serve both? What steps can you take to allow Christ to be the Master whom you serve?

Give what You Have

- 1) Martin Luther speaks of the gifts that God gives to us in form of our respective vocations: *“Therefore, let us learn the First Commandment well, so that we see that God will tolerate no presumption or trust in anything else; he makes no greater demand on us than a heartfelt trust in him for every good thing, so that we walk straight ahead on the right path, using all of God’s gifts exactly as a shoemaker uses a needle, awl, and thread for his work and afterward puts them aside, or as a traveler makes use of an inn, food, and lodging, but only for his physical needs. Let each person do the same in his or her walk of life according to God’s order, allowing none of these things to be a lord or an idol”* (The Large Catechism, The First Commandment, p. 392.47). In what ways do the tools and gifts God gives us become idols?
- 2) What do you have that can be used by God to accomplish great things on behalf of His hurting and oppressed people?

Give Extravagantly

1) In Mark 14, we read of someone giving Jesus an extravagant gift: *“While he was in Bethany, reclining at the table in the home of a man known as Simon the Leper, a woman came with an alabaster jar of very expensive perfume, made of pure nard. She broke the jar and poured the perfume on his head. Some of those present were saying indignantly to one another, “Why this waste of perfume? It could have been sold for more than a year’s wages and the money given to the poor.” And they rebuked her harshly.”* How might tithing (giving 10% of your income) be an extravagant gift?

2) How might tithing be a rational gift?

3) How does our union with Jesus lead us to a life of extravagant giving?

Give Eternally

What are the things into which you invest your time and money? Pastor Keurulainen writes, *“In my Baptism, I have been created anew. There is a new nature within me that desires to invest in things eternal. The two natures compete against each other within me. Things can too easily take possession of me. I know, however, that I am spiritually healthier when I hold onto my possessions loosely, using them to serve others”* (pg. 66). What are some concrete changes that you could make in your life that would make it easier to invest in eternal things, both for you and for others, as opposed to investing in temporal things?

Reach/Serve:

Identify one purchase that you have wanted to make that you would be willing to forego and instead, give the money to a ministry or a charity. Or, devote some of your time to serving or ministering to others that you would have otherwise used for your own pleasure. Pool your time and money together as a group, and do a servant project within your community or church.

Offer:

Sing as a prayer “Take My Life and Let it Be”

1. Take my life and let it be Consecrated, Lord, to Thee;
Take my moments and my days, Let them flow in ceaseless praise.
2. Take my hands and let them move At the impulse of Thy love;
Take my feet and let them be Swift and beautiful for Thee.
3. Take my voice and let me sing Always, only, for my King;
Take my lips and let them be Filled with messages from Thee.

4. Take my silver and my gold, Not a mite would I withhold;
Take my intellect and use Ev'ry pow'r as Thou shalt choose.
5. Take my will and make it Thine, It shall be no longer mine;
Take my heart, is it Thine own, It shall be Thy royal throne.
6. Take my love, my Lord, I pour At Thy feet its treasure store;
Take myself, and I will be Ever, only, all, for Thee.

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For Additional Study

What personality gifts and skills do you feel God has given you? Do others in the group see you the same way?

Give What Will Cost

- 1) Who in your life is a generous person who holds nothing back with you and others?
- 2) In Mark 10, Jesus states his purpose: *“For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”* As we seek to imitate Jesus, what does this passage tell us about how we should be living our lives?
- 3) When John the Baptist commented about Jesus, he said, *“He must become greater; I must become less.”* John 3:30 (NIV). How do we allow Christ to increase in our lives?
- 4) Saint Paul urges us in Romans 12: *“Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.”* In what ways does God use you as a living sacrifice?
- 5) How does the renewal of your mind take place?
- 6) What equips us to follow Christ’s example, walking in his steps (1 Peter 2:21)?

Give Cheerfully

Jesus stated, *“I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.”* John 15:11 (NIV). Is Dallas Willard’s assessment that people are repelled from the church due to Christians who are “unfeeling, stiff, unapproachable, boringly lifeless, obsessive, and dissatisfied” correct? Why, or why not? If it is correct, what is the remedy? Where in your life has God been asking you to give of yourself but your offering has lacked a cheerful spirit? What impact would it have if your spirit in giving would be changed?